

**FIRST RECORD OF ALBINISM IN A MORAY EEL,
MURAENA CLEPSYDRA (MURAENIDAE) FROM ECUADOR**

par

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RÉSUMÉ. - Premier cas d'albinisme chez une murène du Pacifique tropical Est: *Muraena clepsydra* (Muraenidae) d'Équateur.

Une murène albinos adulte de l'espèce *Muraena clepsydra* est signalée des côtes de l'Équateur. Il s'agit du premier cas répertorié pour la famille des Muraenidae, l'albinisme étant par ailleurs connu chez d'autres anguilliformes.

Key words. - Albinism - *Muraena clepsydra* - Eastern tropical Pacific - Ecuador - First record.

On 15 October 1998, a strange moray eel was captured and landed at Puerto López, Ecuador (Fig. 1), by a fisherman, Johnny Vera. This specimen was an albinistic *Muraena clepsydra* Gilbert, 1898 (Fig. 2), a common species in the area (Béarez, 1996) and distributed from the Gulf of California to Northern Peru (McCosker and Rosenblatt, 1995). The specimen was an adult, 825 mm total length and 137 mm head length. The sex couldn't be determined as the eel was gutted. This hourglass moray was not completely albinistic but possessed the big black blotch, around and over the gill opening, which is a characteristic of the species.

Albinism appears to be relatively common among Chondrichthyes (Cohen, 1973; Follett, 1976; De Jesús-Roldán, 1990; Ben-Brahim *et al.*, 1998), but less common among Eastern tropical Pacific Osteichthyes. Very few cases are reported: *Sardinops caeruleus* by Phillips (1946); *Paralabrax nebulifer* by Crane (1967); *Haemulon sexfasciatus* from México (Aguilar-Palomino *et al.*, 1995); and *Paralichthys californicus* by McKeever (1958). According to Dawson (1964, 1966, 1971) and Dawson and Heal (1976), the phenomenon is the most common in flatfishes.

Among Anguilliformes, Rey and Acero (1982) described an albinistic Muraenesocid, *Cynoponticus savanna* (Bancroft, 1831). Knox (1871) mentioned an albino eel (*Anguilla* sp.) from New Zealand, probably *A. australis* Richardson, 1841 or *A. dieffenbachii* Gray, 1842. Jones and Pantulu (1952) cited an albino specimen of *Anguilla bengalensis* (Gray, 1831) from India, Goode



Figure 1. - Map of Ecuador showing the capture site of the albino *Muraena clepsydra*.

(1875), a case of albinism in *Anguilla rostrata* (Lesueur, 1817), and Kangur (1985), a case of albinism in *Anguilla anguilla* (Linnaeus, 1758).

This is the first record of an albino moray-eel.

The skeleton is kept in the Salango Research Center (Presley Norton Foundation, Salango, Manabí, Ecuador) osteological collection under the number 6767.

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Figure 2. - The albino *Muraena clepsydra* caught at Puerto López, Ecuador (Photo J. Vera).

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